

Women trapped in poverty

By Brian Flinn — The Daily News

Nova Scotia is trapping women in poverty by kicking single parents who attend university off welfare, an education advocate said yesterday.

The province allows people collecting social assistance to go to community college, but not university.

The NDP followed the Liberals yesterday by tabling a bill that would allow single parents on welfare to continue getting government support while in university.

Jacquie Farrow-Lawrence, the vice-chairwoman of the Council on African Canadian Education, said the NDP legislation would fix a system that keeps single parents in poverty. A disproportionate number of them are African Nova Scotians and women.

"A policy that denies funding for access to university education ghettoizes and limits the career possibilities of individuals on income assistance seeking to improve their lot in life," she said.

April Landry, 26, is finishing high school and hoped to go to St. Francis Xavier University this fall to take computer sciences. But the Community Services department told the mother of two she can't do it.

"They said, 'That is not an option. There is no way we can pay for it,'" she said.

Instead, Landry will try to find a ride 45 minutes each way from her home in Antigonish to attend community college in Port Hawkesbury. She expects to take a computer technician course.

Shaunderay Clyke, 24, is taking psychology at St. FX., but the bills are mounting.

"I can't afford to pay for prescriptions for my three children," she said. "All of them have asthma."



IN NEED: Shaunderay Clyke (right) and April Landry seek government funding.

Clyke's annual \$10,000 student loan barely covers school expenses. That leaves her trying to raise her family on \$800 per month in baby-bonus cheques.

The minority Hamm government is under pressure from both the NDP and Liberals to help parents like Clyke and Landry. The Liberals introduced a bill Friday, and NDP critic Marilyn More tabled another yesterday, saying "the best thing we can do for children on social assistance is to educate young mothers."

But Community Services Minister David Morse made it clear today's budget won't change the rules. Morse said the changes would be unfair to

other university students.

He suggested the national child benefit, plus the promise of enhanced federal day care subsidies would put single parents on a "level playing field" with other university students — as long as they live in subsidized housing.

He suggested they should get on a housing waiting list if they want to go to university.

"Why don't we address the waiting list for affordable housing?" Morse said.

"Is that not the better way to address the problem?"

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